

A
LETTER
FROM A
Parliament man
TO HIS
FRIEND,

Concerning the Proceedings of the
House of COMMONS this
last Sesssions, begun the 13th of
October, 1675.

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SIR,

I See you are greatly Scandalized at our slow and confused *Proceedings*. I confess you have cause enough, but were you but within these Walls for one half day, and saw the strange Make and Complexion that this House is of; you would wonder as much that ever you wondred at it: For we are such a *pieb Parliamtent*, that none can say of what *Colour* we are; for we consist of *old Cavaliers*, *old Round-heads*, *Indigent Courtiers*, and true *Country Gentlemen*; the two latter are most *numerous*, and would in probability bring things to some Issue, were they not clogged with the humerous uncertainties of the former. For the *old Cavalier* grown Aged, and almost past his Vice, is damnable Godly, and makes his doating *Piety* more a Plague to the

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the World, than his youthful *Debauchery* was : For he is so much a *By-got* to the *Bishops*, that he forces his *Loyalty* to strike Sail to his *Religion*, and could be content to pare the *Nails* a little of the *Civil Government*, so you would but let him sharpen the *Ecclesiastical Tallons* ; which behaviour of his so exasperates the *Round-head*, that he on the other hand cares not what *Increases* the *Interest* of the *Crown* receives, so he can but diminish that of the *Miser* : so that the *Round-head* had rather enslave the *Man*, than the *Conscience* ; The *Cavalier* rather the *Conscience* than the *Man*, there being a sufficient stock of *Animosity* as proper Matter to work upon.

Upon these therefore the *Courtier* mutually plays : For if any *Anticourt* motion be made, he gains the *Round-head* either to oppose or absent, by telling them, *If they will joyn him now, he will joyn with them for Liberty of Conscience*. And when any *Affair* is started on the behalf of the *Countrey*, he assures the *Cavaliers*, *If they will then stand by him, he will then joyn with them in promoting a Bill against the Fanatiques*. Thus play they on both hands, that no Motion of a publick nature is made, but they win upon the one or other of them ; and by this Art gain a Majority against the *Country Gentlemen*, which otherwise they would never have : Wherefore it were happy that we had neither *Round-head*, nor *Cavalier* in the *Houle* ; for they are each of them so Prejudicate against the other, that their sitting here signifies nothing but their Fostering their old *Venome*, and lying at Catch to snap every advantage to bear down each other, though it be in the destruction of their *Countrey*.

For if the *Round-heads* bring in a good *Bill*, the old *Cavalier* opposes it ; for no other reason, but because they brought it in. So that as the poor *English Silk-weavers*, are feign to hire a *French-man* to Sell their *Ribbons* : So are the *Round-heads* a *Cavalier*, to move for those *Bills* they desire should pass ; which so sowers the *Round-head*, that he revenges that Carriage upon any *Bill* the *Cavalier* offers ; and the Rage and Passion of the one and other, are so powerful, that it blinds them both, that neither perceives the Advantage

tage they give the *Courtier*, to abuse both *them* and their *Country* too: so that if either of them do any *Good*, it is only out of pure Envy against the *other*. Thus you see how we are yoked, and seeing this, you may cease your admiration that we offer at *all*, and do just *nothing*.

Nor is this Division alone of the *House* all we have to lament (for Death, that common Cure, does now every day lessen this evil) but that which is more our misery, is, that those *Gentlemen* who are truly for the *Good* of their *Country*, will not be perswaded to stand upon the sure Basis of *Rational Principles* (like Workmen too presumptive of their Judgments that will not Build by rule) but rather affect the most loose standing on the Sandy foundation of Heat and Humour: By reason of which they often do as much harm as good, and yet perceive it not; this is the sore evil we are under. For I would not doubt the *Countries* carrying it from the *Court* in every Vote, let the *Courtiers* use all the Art they could, would the *Country Gentlemen* but give themselves the trouble to enform their understandings a little, and not suffer themselves to be hurried by a heedless Inadvertency into vulgar Notions. Which, if well examined, are directly contrary to their honest intentions; For lack of which they totally mistake their *Interest*, fall foul on their *Friends*, support their *Enemies*, and carry on the designs of the *Court*, whilst they aim at the Service of their *Country*. For if they would take the pains but to think what is the greatest *Enemy* in the World, that *English Law* and *Liberty* always *had*, still *have*, and ever must *have*; It may be the result of such a thought would say, it was *Encroaching Prerogative*. Well, if then they would but beg from themselves but so much seriousness, as to think this *second* thought, to *check this Prerogative*, which is so dangerous an *Enemy* to our *Laws* and *Liberties*, peradventure that thought would answer, *In suppressing all they could its Creatures and Dependants, and supporting such whose Interest it is to keep Prerogative within its just bounds*. Now could they be prevail'd with but to think a third thought, it would Land them at the full and satisfactory Solution of the Question, and will hold in every thing. But I will put it in a *Case*

wherein we are most apt to *Err*, and wherein we reckon it no less than *Piety* to play the *Fool*, to the end you may see how miserably we are cheated and abused, by sucking in the untried *Notions* that *Education*, the *Arts* of others, or our own *Ignorance* have imposed upon us.

The third thought therefore shall be this: *Which are most the Creatures and Supporters of boundless Prerogative, Prelates, or dissenting Protestants?* The answer to which must, and can be no otherwise, *The Prelates*. Well then, if we would now reduce this to Practice, and say, *The greatest Friends to Prerogative are the Prelates, the greatest Enemies to our Laws and Liberties is Prerogative.* The only way therefore to restrain *Prerogative*, is to do, *What?* To fortifie and strengthen the Yoke of the Prelates over the Neck of the People? No: (Surely this were an odd and a barbarous kind of Reasoning) *But to give Liberty to dissenting Protestants, as the best means to keep up the Ballance against boundless Prerogative.* For these must and never can be otherwise (unless by Accident, and by Mistake) than *Friends to Liberty*: But the *Prelates* neither are nor can be otherwise than *Creatures to Prerogative*, for all their *Promotions, Dignities, and Domination* depends upon it.

The same might be said concerning the only Antient and true Strength of the Nation, the *Legal Militia*, and a *standing Army*. The *Militia* must, and can never be otherwise than for *English Liberty*, 'cause else it doth destroy it *self*, but a *standing Force* can be for nothing but *Prerogative*, by whom it hath its *idle Living* and *Subsistance*. I could instance also in many other Particulars, but our Inadvertency in this, is demonstration enough how much we are *cheated* by the common and hackney *Notions* imposed upon us; and this is almost the cause of all the Error we commit. For missing our true Footing, you see we have run in the mistaken Notion of being for the *Church* so long, till we have almost destroyed the *State*, and advanced *Prerogative* so much by suppressing *Nonconformity*, that it's well nigh beyond our reach or power to put Check to it; and had not Time, and but an indifferent Observation, shewed us how much we were abused in this
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matter : And that a *Lay-Conformist* and a *Fanstique* can live as quietly and neighbourly together (would the *Prelates* but suffer them) as any in the World, we had ruined our selves past all recovery. For by our Bouying up the *Bishops* in their harsh and irreconcilable Spirit, in stead of Healing, we have so fed and nourished the Discontents throughout the Kingdom, that I think nothing keeps the Fire from flaming out afresh in another intestine War but the bare circumstance of Opportunity only ; and how long that will be able to restrain *Passions* that are made Wild by *Oppression*, is worthy a very serious Consideration ; and therefore there is hardly any thing more a Wonder to wise Men, than to see the *Clergie* run at this rate upon the *Dissenters* : wherefore since the *Nonconformists* have given so large and ample a Testimony of their willingness to live Peaceably, if yet notwithstanding the *Clergie* will not suffer *them* to be quiet in their Families and their Houses, I doubt, they may at one time or other, drive *them* into the Field, and then it may exceed their *Divine Art* to Conjure them down again ; for he sees but little, that sees not the *English* Temper is better to be Led than Driven. And therefore I think it would not be more a Vanity, to compel the *Ladies* to wear *Queen Elizabeths Ruff*, than to force the *Nonconformists* to be dressed in her Religion.

Nor yet are these all the *Arts* we are under : For we have a Gang that *Huff*, and bear themselves high on the Countrey side, but earn only for the Court ; these lay out their Craft in putting the House upon little trifling things, and spend and waste the Mettle thereof, upon such pittiful *Pickadilloes*, as 'tis next to a shame for an *English Parliament* so much as to mention. These start a fierce Dispute about some little Matter, and keep a bluster as if none were such faithful Patriots as they, when they do it on purpose only to while out the Time, and thin the House, by tiring the honest Country Gentry in so tedious, fruitless, and trifling attendance. Do but move things worthy a Parliament ; as that we may have our old known Rights of Annual Parliaments ascertained : That none that are or shall be Bribed by any Place or Office, shall

ever sit in this House: That *Parliaments* ought not to be *Pro-rogued*, *Adjourned*, or *Dissolved*, till all *Petitions* are heard, and the *Aggrievances* of the *People* redressed; with many things more of as great *Importance*; O then, forsooth, their pretended *Loyalty* (which in plain *English* is easily understood) will not abide such unmannerly and clownish *Debates* as these, and twenty such little shreds of Non-sense are impertinently urged in stead of *Argument*.

But further, These *Country-Court Engines*, after they have taken the Measures of the *House*, at the opening of every *Session*, by our thanks for the *gracious Speech*, which being the true Pulse of the *House*; if it happen to come so hard as speaks us but faint and cool to the one thing necessary, (*the matter of Money*) then they know what will follow, that the *Court* will get no *Grist* that *Sessions*; and though the *Court* in indignation could turn them Home on the *Morrow*, yet it must consult its *Reputation* a little, restrain its *Resentments*, and suffer them to sit about a *six weeks*, or *two months*, and then they assure the *Court*, since they can get no good by them, they shall take no harm; and therefore to stop them from some worthy *Undertaking*, they by their feigned *Zeal* against *Court-Corruptions*, put them upon *Impeaching* some *Treasurer*, *Counsellor*, or *Minister of State*; and having spent half our time about this, the rest is spent for the *Clergie* upon *Church-Work*, which we have been so often put upon and tired with these many *Sessions*: Though *Partiality* unbecomes a *Parliament*, who ought to lay the whole Body that we represent a like case, *Nonconformists*, as well as *Conformists*, for we were chosen by both, and with that intention that we should oppress neither. To lay one part therefore of the Body on a *Pillow*, and the other on a *Rack*, sorts our *Wisdom* little, but our *Justice* worse. You now see all our Shapes, save only the *Indigents*, concerning whom I need say but little, for their *Votes* are publicly saleable for a *Guiny*, and a *Dinner* every day in the *Week*, unless the *House* be upon *Money* or a *Minister of State*: For that is their *Harvest*, and then they make their *Earnings* suit the *Work* they are about, which inclines them most constantly as sure

Clyants to the *Court*. For what with gaining the *one* and saving the *other*, they now and then adventure a *Vote* on the *Country* side ; but the dread of *Dissolution* makes them strait tack about. The only thing we are obliged to them for, is, that they do nothing *Grain*, but make every *Tax* as well Chargeable to the *Court*, as burthensome to the *Country*, and save no Mans *Neck*, but they break his *Purse*. And yet when all is said, did but the *Country Gentry* rightly understand the *interest* of *Liberty*, let the *Courtiers* and *Indigents* do what they could, they might yet at last deserve the Name of a worthy *English Parliament* ; Which that we may do, is not more passionately your desire, than it also is of,

Sir, ,

Your most humble

Servant.

T. E

FINIS.

